

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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50X1-HUM

COUNTRY	USSR (Urals)	REPORT	
SUBJECT	Soviet Uranium Mines near Cherkansk	DATE DISTR.	25 October 1954
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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
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1. Uranium mines were reported about 15 kilometers southeast of Cherkansk in the Urals.¹ In 1945 and 1946 these mines had 20 to 25 shafts, some of which had been exploited for eight to ten years.
2. During World War II about 8,000 German PWs were quartered in barracks, each containing 80 prisoners, near the center of this mining area. The PWs worked in the mines with 2,000 to 3,000 free Soviet civilians. The mines were administered by the MVD, which provided MVD troops as guards.
3. The uniformed prisoners were driven to work by trucks. On arrival at the mines they changed into inadequate overalls made of one layer of canvas and one of rubber. The guards had regular overalls made of several layers of linen and rubber. The prisoners wore primitive cotton-wool face masks which they wet with water. Once, when the supply of these masks was exhausted, prisoners worked without them. Working hours were from 0600 to 1400 hours. Working teams of five PWs were guarded by one MVD soldier. Prisoners' afternoons and Sundays were free from work and were devoted mainly to political indoctrination.
4. Uranium in the Cherkansk mines was found in layers 60 to 220 meters underground and was extracted in lump form. Before boring, the layer was tested with a special device which resembled a mine detector connected with earphones. (See Sketch of Detector Apparatus) Testing was carried out by a team of experts known as radiometristy. These experts were exclusively Soviet. The PWs had no access to the "radiometers".
5. Boring was done with a hand drill, operated by a combination of compressed air and water; the latter was supposed to neutralize the radioactive mineral dust, dangerous to the lungs. The drill rested on a device known

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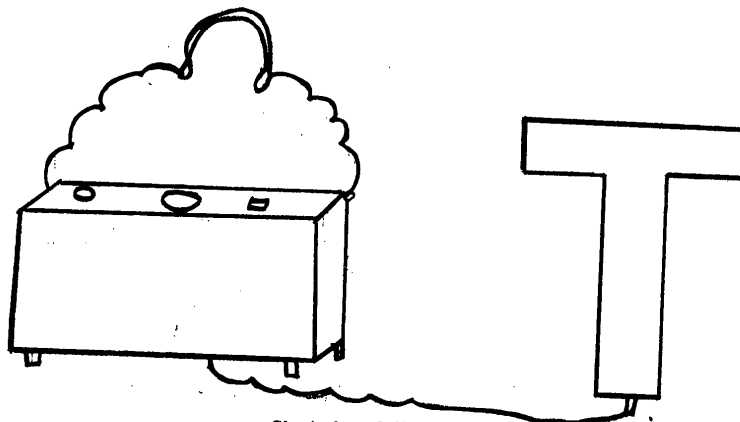
(NOTE: Washington distribution indicated by "X"; Field distribution by "#".)

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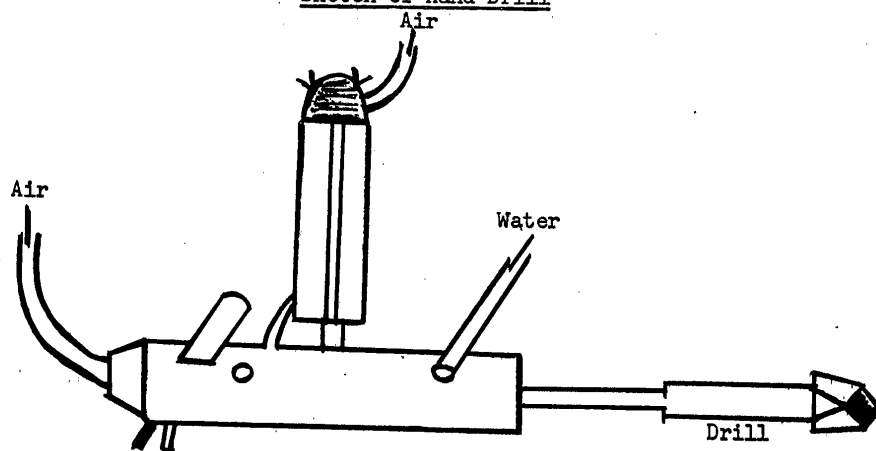
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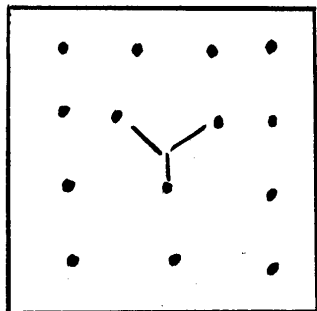
Sketch of Detector Apparatus



Sketch of Hand Drill



Sketch of Holes for Blasting



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as a kozol, which intensified the action of the drill by means of compressed air. (See Sketch of Hand Drill)

6. Before placing explosives in position, the prisoners bored 14 holes in a square pattern. (See Sketch of Holes for Blasting) Lignite charges were placed by Army engineers.
7. After the explosion the ore was loaded on cars and taken to a special platform at the surface, where it was tested by the radiometristy for radioactivity and uranium content. Prisoners took the ore which was satisfactory to storehouses in cars under MVD guard and immediately reloaded the ore into special wooden boxes lined with lead. The dimensions of these boxes were 50 by 40 by 45 centimeters. The boxes were bound by steel bands. They were loaded 16 to 24 to a truck, which was covered with canvas and driven by two Army drivers. An MVD soldier sat in the back between the two rows of boxes, apparently to observe both boxes and drivers.

1. Comment: Cherkansk was not located. Possibly Cherkassy (N 54-54, E 56-12), Bashkir ASSR, is intended.

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